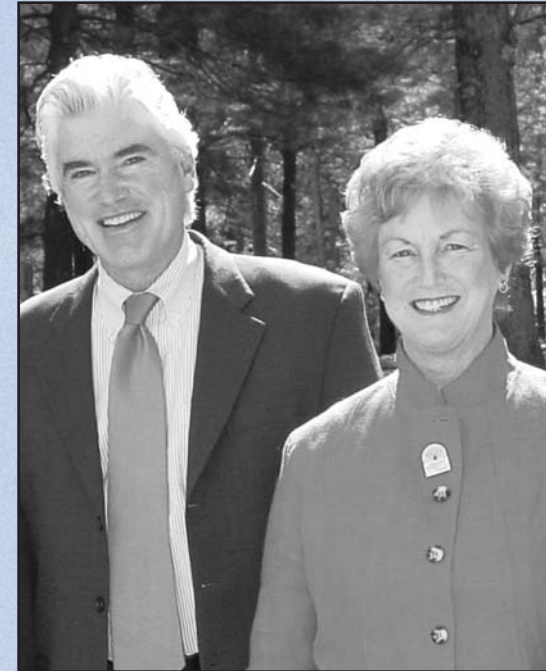


2006 Legislative Report to the 8th District

State Senator Thomas J. Herlihy



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Road Safety Initiatives

On July 29, 2005, one of the most horrific traffic accidents in our state's history occurred at the base of Avon Mountain. The accident, which claimed four lives and injured dozens, led to the implementation of many



Senator Herlihy with David and Angie Tolly, the owners of Avon Old Farms Inn, and Senator Harris

new transportation highway safety improvements.

Immediately following the accident I, along with Senator Jonathan Harris of West Hartford, asked Governor Rell and the Connecticut Department of Transportation (DOT) to create the Avon Mountain Accident Task Force. Through the efforts of this Task Force and the leadership of Governor Rell, numerous safety improvements to the roadway were enacted. Most notable was the expediting of the road improvement project that will ultimately lead to additional lanes on both sides of Avon Mountain and a wide painted median on the most sharply curved portions of the roadway.

Truck Safety Initiatives

The Avon Mountain tragedy also led to new laws pertaining to truck safety. This year I sponsored legislation that now allows the Department of Motor Vehicles to order any motor carrier with an unsatisfactory safety rating to cease operations until it receives a satisfactory rating. Another new law calls for the hiring of nine new truck inspectors whose ultimate responsibility will be to keep trucks like the one involved in last year's crash off the road.

One of my most important initiatives this session addressed the issue of driver competency. That is why under a new law that I authored, all newly employed truck drivers in our state must be given a road test and written certification by their new employer that they have the knowledge, skill, and competency to drive their vehicle safely.

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State Senator *Thomas J. Herlihy*

Dear Neighbor,

The 2006 Session of the Connecticut General Assembly has come to a close. The Session, which began in early February, closed on May 3rd with a flurry of legislation.

Connecticut operates under a biennial (two-year) budget system. The two-year state budget is always ratified in the first year of the biennium. Being the second year of the biennium, the main responsibility of the legislature in 2006 was to make adjustments to the state budget that was adopted last

year. I am pleased to report that in a bipartisan manner, the legislature passed a budget that holds taxes and spending increases in check while providing additional state aid to our local communities.

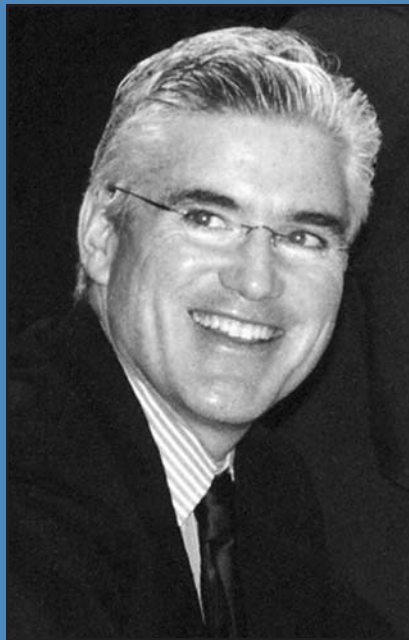
There were many other issues that came before the legislature this year. While many important initiatives passed both chambers of the legislature and became law, other measures were not as fortunate and fell victim to the confines of the "short session."

Please take a moment to read about some of the important measures that were addressed in 2006. You can also visit my state senate website at www.senaterepublicans.ct.gov for updates on events taking place at the Capitol.

If you have any specific questions regarding these issues or any issue concerning state government, please feel free to call my office at 1-800-842-1421, e-mail me at Thomas.Herlihy@cga.ct.gov or write to me at:

*Senator Thomas Herlihy, Legislative Office Building,
Room 3400, Hartford, CT 06106.*

Sincerely,



Budget

Under the strong leadership of Governor M. Jodi Rell, the legislature this year adopted a \$16.07 billion state budget. While the budget includes a modest increase in state spending, it also provides tax relief for individuals, businesses and municipalities. What's more, the revised budget makes a significant deposit into the Rainy Day Fund, and fully funds the Teachers' Retirement Fund for the 2006 and 2007 fiscal years.

The adjusted state budget provides over \$115 million in additional aid to Connecticut's municipalities, including over \$1.8 million to the towns of the 8th District. As ranking member of the legislature's Education Committee, one of my top priorities is to make sure that towns get their fair share of state education funding. I am happy to report that funding from the state's Education Cost Sharing (ECS) system will be increased for all 11 towns. Included is an extra \$800,000 for the Town of Simsbury to fix an ECS funding discrepancy that I fought long and hard to change.

Taxes

The adjusted state budget reduces taxes in Connecticut by \$160 million in 2007. I am pleased to report that the property tax credit that currently stands at \$350 will be restored to \$500 beginning with the 2006 income tax year.

In an effort to create and maintain quality jobs in our state, the legislature has made a series of tax changes that affect businesses, including the repeal of the 15% corporate tax surcharge for the 2007 income year and the phase out of the tax on manufacturers' machinery and equipment by the 2011 assessment year. Additionally, three new job creation tax credits were passed.

- **Job Creation Tax Credit**
Businesses that create at least 50 new jobs will be eligible for a credit equal to 25% of the estimated withholding tax per new employee for up to five years.
- **Displaced Worker Tax Credit**
A business tax credit of \$1,500 for each displaced (laid off) worker the company hires.
- **Film Industry Tax Credit**
A credit equal to 30% of in-state production costs.



Open Space

Our region has witnessed the damaging effects of commercial sprawl and unplanned residential development.

Never before has the need to preserve open space been more important and it is the reason why I have fought so hard to make open space preservation a priority. Since I have served the 8th District, over \$8,000,000 in grants have been awarded for the preservation of farmland and open space. Each and every town has benefited from this funding. I continue to fight for additional funding, the most recent example being over \$1,000,000 awarded for the purchase of Jones Mountain and the Goula Property in New Hartford.

This year I was able to pass into law legislation that will allow any municipal government greater flexibility in passing ordinances that would allow them to trade long term tax abatement for the transfer of development rights and the preservation of open space.

Along with my good friend and colleague, Senator Andrew Roraback of Goshen, I co-sponsored two amendments that would have set aside funding for open space initiatives. One would have required that 10% of the state's budget surplus be utilized to fund open space acquisition. The second measure was a proposed constitutional amendment that would have allowed every voter in Connecticut to decide (via referendum) if they wanted a portion of the state's sales tax to be earmarked for the preservation of open space. While these amendments did not become law, I remain committed to working for this important environmental issue.

Sex Offender Legislation

After pressure from Senate Republicans, the state Senate unanimously passed stronger penalties for pedophiles who sexually assault children. The bill created mandatory sentences of 25 years in prison for a first time offense and life imprisonment for a second offense for persons convicted of first degree, second degree and aggravated sexual assault of a child under age 13, as well as for promoting prostitution of a minor. The bill was patterned after Florida's "Jessica's Law," that was passed in response to the kidnapping and killing of 9 year old Jessica Lunsford by a released pedophile. Sadly, the measure was never taken up in the House of Representatives.

Current law provides that when a person uses the internet to knowingly entice a person under age 16 to engage in prostitution or sexual activity where a crime may be charged, that person is guilty of only a class D felony (1 to 5 years) for the first offense. The second offense becomes a class C felony (1 to 10), the third a class B felony (1 to 20). Our proposal would have made the simple use of the internet to lure a child under 13 into a sexual situation a crime punishable by 25 years in jail, and a second offense would have sent the predator away for life.

